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Mound Builder's Works, Near Newark, Ohio.

BY ISAAC SMUCKER.

[The substance of the following paper, descriptive of the Newark group of Mound Builder's works, was written for and appeared in the July number of The American Antiquarian, a quarterly review, devoted to the interests of Ethnology and Archæology, published in Chicago, and edited by Rev. S. D. Peet, DD.]

In few localities are the works of the Mound Builders more extensive, more numerous, more labyrinthine, more diversified in style and character, more gigantic in proportions than those in the immediate vicinity of Newark, Ohio. Mr. Atwater, one of Ohio's early-time archæologists, more than two generations ago, personally made more or less thorough examinations of a large proportion of the most celebrated of the works of the Mound Builders in Ohio, and also careful mathematical surveys of many of the most elaborate and prominent of them elsewhere; after having done so, he characterized those at Newark as "the most extensive and intricate, as well as the most interesting in this State, perhaps in the world!" On many accounts, he declared them to be "quite as remarkable as any in North America."

This group of Mound Builders' Works first became known to the white settler of the Licking Valley, eighty-three years ago, all of them being then covered with a dense growth of forest trees, many of them having a circumference of more than ten feet, and showing by their concentric circles to have

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had a growth of more than five hundred years. A heavy undergrowth also covered the works, almost hiding them from view. In short, they were situated in the wilderness, when the pioneers of the valley discovered them, having never suffered from the ravages of the plow, nor had the giant growths of walnut, sugar, maple, beech, oak and wild cherry trees that stood upon their banks and within their enclosures, ever been despoiled by the woodman's axe.

To give assurance to the reader of the accuracy of the descriptions, the writer hereof states that he has been familiar with the localities and antiquities here described, for more than fifty-five years. He saw them while yet more than nine-tenths of this renowned group of ancient works had been undisturbed by the devastating plow and harrow of the pioneer, or by the destructive axe of the inconoclastic woodsman. In those days, all of "ye olden time," he sometimes "followed the chase," though rather as an amateur hunter, and with the sportsman's gun in hand, at leisure hours, during a period running through many years, he pursued the game over these interesting works, which were still covered with a dense undergrowth and trees of gigantic size; therefore, it may be claimed that he has been writing about something of which he ought to have some knowledge.

He early became acquainted with Mr. Atwater, the first Ohio writer upon Archæology; read his description of these ancient works, not many years after The American Antiquarian Society published them; was long and intimately acquainted with Judge Holmes, who surveyed them for him; had interchanged opinions with these gentlemen and other antiquarians respecting them: had lived within sight of and upon the border of these extensive works of the Mound Builders, more than fifty years; moreover, had made the measurements some of them; he has therefore described works which have been under his own often-repeated observation,

of which he has actual personal knowledge, and of which he has had ample opportunities to acquire information; stimulated withal by a wish and earnest desire to acquire all the knowledge attainable respecting them.

The Raccoon and South Fork Creeks unite on the southern borders of Newark, and these ancient works cover an area of three of four square miles between these streams and contiguous to them, extending about two miles up the Raccoon and a less distance up the South Fork. These works are situated on an elevated plain thirty or forty feet above these streams, the Raccoon forming the northerly boundary of said plain, and the South Fork its southwestern boundary. The streams come together nearly at right angles, the three or four square miles of land, therefore, covered with these ancient works, situated between said creeks, and extending several miles up both of them from their junction, is, in form, very nearly an equilateral triangle.

The foregoing works consisted of earth mounds, both large and small, in considerable numbers, of parallel walls or embankments, of no great but tolerably uniform height; of small circles, partial or incompleted circles, semi or open circles, all of low, but well-marked embankments or walls; of enclosures of various forms and heights, such as large circles—one parallelogram, one octagon, and, others which may have become partially or wholly obliterated under the operation of the plow, or through the devastating action of the elements, their banks have been originally of small elevation, and among them one of the class designated as "effigy mounds." This remains in a good state of preservation, situated within and about the center of the largest circular enclosure, known as "The Old Fort," and will be described further on, only remarking here that it is a representation of an immense bird "on the wing," and is called "Eagle Mound."

By reference to the cut representing the Newark earthworks it will be seen that there is, north of the railroad, a circular fort or enclosure, marked thirty acres (which, however, should be only twenty), connected by parallel banks with another of octagon form, having eight openings, with a protection mound or embankment covering each of the entrances. This contains fifty acres, and a large portion of it has been plowed over, although the banks are readily traceable and the portion of it that remains in the woods still shows the banks to be five or six feet in height. The gateways are about fifteen feet wide, and the walls inside of each are of the same height and size of the enclosure generally, and are about four feet longer than the width of the openings or gateways. The walls of this work, as well as those of the circular enclosure with which it is connected, are as nearly perpendicular as the earth could be made to lie, but are quite a number of feet in width on the top, even where the plow has not run over them. It will be observed that there is a considerable enlargement of the bank of the circular enclosure, directly opposite the entrance into it, through the parallel walls or covered way connecting it with the octagon enclosure. This was, doubtless, an observatory, and commanded an extensive view of the plain and over the whole system of works. This observatory has been greatly mutilated and despoiled by excavations into it and by the removal of considerable of the stone and earth that composed it; still, although in ruins, it is twenty feet or more in height, while the banks of the enclosure, generally, are not ten feet. Under this observatory, it is probable, there was a secret or subterranean passage to a stream that flowed near it.

The cut shows three covered ways or parallel walls that lead across the railroad to other portions of this group of works. One conducts to a circular work, now almost obliterated, situated at the crossing of the canal by the railroad.

Another leads directly into the square enclosure marked twenty acres, which has an entrance at each corner, and also at the northeast and southwest sides, the latter having two covered ways to the enclosure. All the gateways or entrances are protected by small mounds inside, as in the case of the octagon. The Ohio canal passes through this work, and so also does an extensively traveled State road; and the portion of this square enclosure whose banks have not been thus obliterated has been cultivated for at least half a century so that its high banks or walls, which, probably were never very high, are now barely traceable.

None of these works, except the "Old Fort," had any moats or ditches connected with them either inside or outside. Parallel walls, with the space between widening as they approach the gateway of the "Old Fort," the most gigantic of all the works of this group, connected this square enclosure with it, as well as with other works of this group. The parallel walls that extend southward from one of the gateways of the octagonal work, as seen in the cut, was traceable many miles in the direction of the Hockhocking river, at some point north of Lancaster, where Mr. Atwater thought it connected with other similar works. It is not known to the writer, however, that any effort was ever made to follow these parallel walls to ascertain with certainty that the space between them did or did not serve the purpose of a road between this point and the Hockhocking.

The "Old Fort" is situated a mile and a half in a southwesterly direction from the Court House in Newark, and belongs to the class of Mound Builders' works known as enclosures. It is not a true circle, the respective diameters being eleven hundred and fifty and twelve hundred and fifty feet. Its banks, nearly a mile in length, were formed by throwing up the earth on the inside, which left a ditch of sloping sides, ten feet (in many places more) in depth, and ranges in per-

pendicular height, measuring, from bottom of ditch to top of bank, from twenty to thirty feet. This enclosure, which embraces within it about twenty-seven acres of land, was constructed on level ground, and the ditch above described was often seen, during the earlier decades of the present century partially, and sometimes wholly, filled with water all around the circle. From some cause it has not held water of late years to any great extent. Viewed from the outside, the embankment does not rise more than ten or fifteen feet above the surface of the surrounding ground, but observed from its top, the eye taking in the depth of the ditch, it seems, of course, much higher, so as to correspond in height, at least, to the figures above given.

The "Old Fort" has an entrance or gateway which is flanked by a high bank or parapet on either side of it, running outward forty yards. The gateway and parallel walls or parapets are on the eastern side of the circle, and the ditch which follows it also extends to the termination of the parallel banks that cover the entrance. Here the banks are the highest; the parallel walls, as well as those which form the circle immediately adjoining them at the gateway, reaching, for a short distance, a perpendicular height of at least thirty feet, measuring from the bottom of the ditch, or twenty feet measuring on the outside. The gateway or entrance measures seventy-five feet between the ditches or moats, and between the parapets or banks of earth that flank the entrance, one hundred and thirty feet.

Trees of a large size are still growing upon the banks, all around the circle, as well as upon the parallel walls at the entrance. They are equal in size to those that are yet found both on the outside of the enclosure and within it, and of the same varieties. Some of them measure ten feet in circumference and are still thrifty, giving no indications of decay. One of the largest trees that stood on this embankment was

cut down in 1815, and its concentric circles showed that it had attained the venerable age of five hundred and fifty years. Many others of its contemporaries, too, are still flourishing and enjoying an equally vigorous "green old age." This fact may be borne in mind as indicating the antiquity of this wonderful work, especially when taken in connection with the strong probabilities that this tree, of now more than six centuries ago, was more likely of the second or third growth of trees than of the first, after the Mound Builders had erected this enclosure which is only one of the extensive series of labyrinthine works, whose embankments measure many miles in length, and which, by low parallel banks were connected with others of similar character, as remote from them as are those of the Hockhocking and other distant places.

In the middle of the "Old Fort" is an elevation, evidently artificial, which never fails to attract the attention of the observing, and is generally designated as "Eagle Mound." It is full six feet high, and is in the form and shape of an eagle in flight, with wings outspread, measuring from tip to tip two hundred and forty feet, and from head to tail two hundred and ten feet, and is clearly of the effigy class of the works of the Mound Builders. It faces the entrance, and therefore lies in an east and west direction, its wings extending north and south. Excavations made many years ago into the center of this earthen figure, where the elevation is greatest, developed an altar built of stone, upon which were found ashes, charcoal and calcined bones, showing that it had been used for sacrificial purposes.

Many have held the opinion that the "Old Fort" was a military work, constructed for defence; but its location on a level plain, its symmetrical form and inside ditch, and the indications of the presence of fire seen on the altar, and its sacrificial uses so clearly suggested, all go to render this opinion erroneous, or to say the least, one highly improbable.

All the known facts pertaining to it go to raise the presumption that within its enclosure were conducted, by Mound Builders, the rites and ceremonies of their religion, they having manifestly been a religious and superstitious race, given to the practice of offering up human as well as animal sacrifices.

Others have believed that the "Old Fort" was the seat of government of the Mound Builders, and that their monarch resided here; and still others have held that within this enclosure they practiced their national games, and amusements, similar, possibly, to the Olympic, Nemean, Pythian and Isthmian games that were so universally popular with the enlightened Greeks during the "Lyrical Ages of Greece." Others, still, hold different opinions, but I think the weight of evidence is altogether in favor of the theory that the "Old Fort," one of the most renowned of all the Mound Builders' works, was constructed for the use of a sacred enclosure, and was, therefore, primarily built and used for purposes connected with their religion; albeit it may have also been their seat of government, and residence of their monarch: and may posibly, also have been sometimes used for the practice of their national games. Least likely of all is the notion that it was constructed for military purposes or was ever used as a defensive work.

It was in October, 1800, when Isaac Stadden, a pioneer settler in the Licking Valley discovered it, and it is not certain so far as is known to the writer, that any of the white race had ever seen it before the above date.

The foregoing are the principal works of the Mound Builders of the Newark group that remain. As already indicated, many of them that were in a good state of preservation very many years after Mr. Atwater had them surveyed, have been utterly destroyed by agencies heretofore mentioned: but as an additional and potent agency in their demolition, the pro-

cess of building a town (West Newark) upon them, already numbering its inhabitants by hundreds, has been going on of late years, and naturally enough, as far as its streets, alleys and lots extend, the ancient works have all been leveled by he plow, the scraper and the shovel.

At and near the termination of some of the connecting parallel walls, or embankments, there were, originally, at many points, watch-towers, or small mounds of observation, which have almost wholly disappeared, the plow having been run over most of them for half a century or more. When Mr. Atwater first surveyed or rather had these works surveyed by Judge Holmes (who was a competent surveyor) more than sixty years ago—they being still in the wilderness—the aforesaid watch-towers, or small mounds of observation, were yet so plainly observable that he located them on his map or engraving of these ancient works. But they and many others are gone—entirely obliterated. Some disappeared when the Ohio canal was run through this group of ancient works, in 1827: others were destroyed thirty years ago, when the road-bed of the Central Ohio railroad was constructed, which runs for a mile or more through this triangle of ancient earthworks: a number more were demolished within a few years, during the progress of the erection of extensive buildings for rolling mill purposes: and others, many others, as well as low banks or parallel connecting walls or embankments, and small observatories, have disappeared under the long continued ravages of the plow.

The author of the recently published "History of Licking County," remarks as follows upon some of these obliterated ed mounds:

"A curious group of mounds that attracted the attention and wonder of the pioneers were unfortunately destroyed by the building of the Central Ohio railroad. They were not far from the "Old Fort," and stood just at the foot of Cherry

Valley, and a little east of the Ohio canal, where the above mentioned railroad crosses it. Three of these mounds stood in a line north and south; the fourth was a little east and between the two northern ones. They were all joined together at the base. In the destruction of this remarkable group of mounds, many interesting relics and facts were unearthed that appear worth preservation. The mound farthest south was included in the embankment of the Central Ohio railroad and was first destroyed. The other three were greatly injured by the earth being taken to make the railroad embankment. The northern mound was the largest, and was about twenty feet high. This was finally leveled to form the site for a rolling mill. The upper eight feet of this mound was composed almost entirely of black loam, which appeared in layers. These layers or strata had seams where the earth did not unite, although it appeared to be of the same character. Between these layers there were often marks of fire, and in one place, from four to six inches extending across the mound, there were strong marks of fire, with charcoal and ashes. The different layers of earth did not often reach all over the mound—sometimes not over more than a fourth of it, and often overlapped each other at the edges. It would seem that these layers of earth were put on at considerable intervals of time, first on one side then on the other, the different sides of the mound varying in structure. In the upper eight feet of this mound, no human or other bones were found. Several fine sheets of mica were taken out. A hole near the center was observed to continue down very near to the bottom of the mound. In some places this was filled with sand, differing from the earth around it. In the lower eight feet of the mound, quite a number of these perpendicular holes were observed. One on the east side was filled with fine charcoal and ashes, and extended fully four feet below the surrounding surface of the earth. The whole base of this mound was of disturbed earth, four or more feet below the surrounding surface. Some six or eight of these post holes were discovered, but none but the center one continued for more than a few feet. They were mostly filled with fine sand. About one-half of the lower portion of the mound was made of layers of blue clay; then there was a layer of sand, followed by one of cobble-stone, which appeared to be immediately over a strong burning. This layer of stone

was about five feet from the base. In the middle mound the layer of cobble stone was about eight feet from the base; was in the center of the mound sixteen inches thick, and extended all over it, thinning out towards the edges. The cobble stones, in all places, seemed to be put on immediately over the burning, none of the stones having the marks of fire, except those coming in contact with the burnt earth. The heat of the fire must have been intense, for the small stones in places, were quite friable, and in many places marked with oxide of iron. This iron appearance led many to think that iron tools might have been placed there and rusted out.

"In the fourth mound, the cobble-stones were placed over burnings and on a level with the surrounding surface, and covered with creek sand. The blue clay in the northern mound must have been brought from a distance, there being none near like it.

"About three feet below the surrounding surface of the earth, and near the bottom of the large mound, the workmen, in digging the pit for the fly-wheel, found several pieces of bones and a part of the jaw of a human being, with one tooth yet remaining in it. All the bones gave evidence of great age, and were in small pieces.

"The cobble-stone layers in these mounds and the post holes are unusual features. Could the latter have been for a frame work, from which to suspend victims for sacrifice?"

"Surrounding this entire group of mounds was a cobble-stone way eight feet wide. This is yet plainly to be seen north of the railroad, but the remainder has been destroyed. This oblong circle of stone must have been one hundred yards in its north and south diameter, and sixty-six yards east and west. Within sight of this group of mounds were originally about one dozen. Many of these have been destroyed. The digging of the pit for the fly-wheel revealed the lower portion of this mound better than examinations heretofore made, and showed plainly that human beings had been buried at least four feet beneath the surrounding surface of the earth.

"During the excavating process, the place was visited by many citizens and gentlemen from a distance, and much interest taken.

"The greater portion of these mounds being composed of sand and loam, may account for the paucity of bones found

in them. The best perserved skeletons are found where the ground is mostly clay.

"It was observed by the early settlers that the Indians buried their dead in and about these mounds: but these burials were thought to be easily distinguishable from those of the Mound Builders.

"In 1827, while digging the Ohio Canal, a small mound was dug out where the second lock now stands. Many human bones were found similar to those in the group above mentioned.

"Several skeletons were found buried near these mounds, which were no doubt, those of Indians, the bones indicating no great age, and having copper instruments buried with them. Near one was found two copper quivers for arrows, and a large shell which had apparently been used as a drinking cup. Another small skeleton had by its side a quiver for arrows, and a copper hatchet, with beads and other trinkets. These Indians and Mound Builders appeared to have two things in common: one was the copper implements, and the other the sheets of mica. This latter is found in their mounds and mixed with their crockery. The small Indian skeleton referred to above was partly covered with mica, some of it adhering to the bones. Another skeleton was found, covered with large sheets of mica; at least half a peck of mica, with the bones were brought to town. This, at the time, was supposed to be the remains of an Indian. All the copper yet found in the mounds in this region has been native, unsmelted.

"According to some antiquarians, these mounds would be called sacrificial or altar mounds, but the truth is that most, if not all, in this vicinity are of a similar character, and might, with the same propriety, be called sacrificial, for, as a general thing, a skeleton, or sometimes two or three, side by side, are found covered with earth, then evidence of fire, then another skeleton covered in the same way, and so on; but these skeletons and evidences of fire do not extend regularly over the mound. Sometimes a skeleton and a burning will be found only on one side, and then again on the other at a different elevation; but almost always in every mound is found one grand burning extending all over the mound, as if they had been a grand ceremony for the benefit of all those buried beneath. In the large mound above mentioned

there were two of these general burnings. Sometimes, human bones are found with the marks of fire, indicating the probability of human sacrifices."

To recapitulate, it may be observed that the Newark group of Mound Builders' works embraced circular, quadrilateral and octagonal enclosures—parallel embankments—covered ways—an effigy mound as in the middle of "The Old Fort," known as "Eagle Mound,"—parapets, as those flanking the entrance of gateway of "The Old Fort"—protection walls, as those inside of the angles of the square and octagonal enclosures—watch-towers, such as were situated near the termination of parallel walls—an "Observatory Mound," as the one on the bank of the Circular Mound connected with the Octagon, and facing the entrance into it from the latter—half circles—partially open circles—a sacrificial mound, called "Eagle Mound," being of the effigy class, (also called Animal Mounds, and Emblematic or Symbolical Mounds)—and, finally, burial mounds, being those which, on examination, were found to contain human skeletons, and which are sometimes styled Sepulchral Mounds.

The writer is not able to say with certainty that any truncated or Temple Mound, used in connection with their religious ceremonies, or memorial or Monumental Mounds, erected to perpetuate the memory of some important event or in honor of some distinguished character, or Condemnatory Mounds belonged to the Newark group of Mound Builders' works. If at any time there were such, they have been obliterated in the process of digging the canal, the railroad bed, the foundations for a rolling-mill and machine works, constructing several State and neighborhood roads, in excavating and grading the streets and alleys of West Newark, and by running the plow-share over and through them for half a century or more, thereby overslaughing Archæology to the great profit of Agriculture.

The inside of one of the most conspicuous enclosures of the group of Mound Builders' works in the vicinity of Newark, containing twenty-seven acres, and the adjacent grounds on the outside of the embankment and all around it, constitute the Fair Grounds of The Licking County Agricultural Society, where their fairs are annually held; and it may be confidentily asserted that in archæological interest, and numerous other attractive features, and in their adaptation to the purposes of a County Agricultural Society, our Fair Grounds are surpassed by few, if any, in the United States.

NOTE—Mention is made in the last but one of the foregoing paragraphs, of Condemnatory Mounds, and, as public attention has not been extensively called to this class of Mound Builders' works, I may be permitted a brief explanation We have a few of what may be properly called Condemnatory or Imprecatory Mounds in Licking County (one being situated about a mile northwest of Vanattaburg), and probably more in Ohio than is generally supposed. They abound in some Oriental countries, and especially in Bible Lands, as will appear from the following historical references to them in the Scriptures:

Achan, who appears on the Scripture records as a thief, was stoned and burned for his crime, and buried, "and a great heap of stones was raised over him." See Joshua, chapter 7, verse 25.

The wicked king of the ancient Israelitish city of Ai was captured by Joshua, and "hanged on a tree until even-tide, when he was taken down and buried, and a great heap of stones was piled on his grave." See Joshua, chapter 8, verse 29.

The allied kings (five in number) were conquered by Joshua, and hanged for their wickedness, and "cast into a cave and great stones laid into the cave's mouth." See Joshua, chapter 10, verse 27.

And Absalom, the rebellious son of David, having been slain, it is stated in the second book of Samuel, chapter 18, verse 17 that "they took him and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him."

It thus seems that among the very ancient Israelites piles of stones were heaped upon the graves of persons who died under public contempt or condemnation, and whose memory was execrated, and those heaps of stones are ap-

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propriately named Condemnatory, Objurgatory or Imprecatory Mounds. They seem to have arisen by the gradual process of each passer-by throwing a stone upon the grave, and thereby slowly rearing mounds of the above classification, bearing a title indicating feelings and expressions of detestation, scorn, contempt, execration. Possibly, our prehistoric races were indebted to the Israelites of ancient times for the idea, the purpose, the method of construction of this class of mounds!

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